

Future looking grim for Gates

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WASHINGTON—Robert Gates' nomination to become CIA director is "damn near doomed" by his role in the IranCon arms scandal, a knowledgeable source said yesterday.

President Reagan's allies yesterday could count no more than 30 sure votes among the 100 senators for Gates' confirmation, though a full GOP headcount won't be finished until late today. A majority of senators voting would be needed for the confirmation to go through.

Sources said Reagan probably will not decide until late this week whether to pull the plug on Gates. The President wants to see whether criticism of the CIA deputy subsides after Gates gives secret testimony on IranCon to the Senate Intelligence Committee on Wednesday.

Another potential candidate to head the CIA, sources say, is retired Gen. Brent Scowcroft, a Tower Commission member and former national security adviser to President Gerald Ford. Scowcroft said on NBC-TV's "Meet the Press" that he was "not particularly" interested in the job and that it hadn't been offered, but he did not rule it out.

Reagan's friends have told him Gates "has the smell of Irangate on him," and Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), a widely respected lawmaker, said the odds now are 51% to 49% against Gates being confirmed.

Look again, Ron

"I think the President ought to take a second look," said Reagan's close friend, former Sen. Paul Laxalt.

Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole (R-Kan.) said Gates is in trouble on two fronts. If Senate Democrats decide to move for a quick confirmation vote after his Wednesday testimony, Gates would likely lose, according to Dole. But the administration also would suffer if the

nomination is held up for a half year or more while investigators finish their probe of Gates' role in the scandal.

Gates was criticized by lawmakers and members of the Tower board for overseeing intelligence analyses at the CIA that encouraged the administration to think it could begin dealing with "moderates" in Ayatollah Khomeini's government. And Gates was denounced for failing to vigorously pursue evidence that cash from the Iran arms sales was being diverted illegally to Contras in Nicaragua.

In another IranCon development yesterday, Scowcroft and former Sen. John Tower, the head of the presidential panel that probed the scandal, disagreed about a key point of testimony by the President.

Asked about memo

Tower said Reagan was asked directly whether he had seen the "smoking gun" memo from National Security Council aide Oliver North outlining plans to divert money from the U.S.-Iran arms sales to the Contras, and that Reagan denied ever seeing it.

But Scowcroft said Reagan was not asked directly about the memo, but was asked if he had any knowledge of the diversion, and that Reagan said he had not known about the diversion.

The memo was written in early April 1986 and had markings that indicated it was prepared for the President. It outlined how \$12 million in proceeds from the upcoming arms sale could be funneled to the Contras. When it was found in North's safe, the memo was stapled to a document that Reagan had initialed that spelled out the bargaining terms a U.S. team was to use when it went to Tehran to try to win release of American hostages held in Lebanon.

Meanwhile, in the wake of the Tower report, which was released last Thursday, sources say the President is determined to show that he can run his government. He has told intimates he has "learned a very foreboding lesson" and the "days of

hands-off policy are seriously over," Laxalt said.

The President plans to deliver that message to the American people Wednesday night in a prime-time televised address in response to the Tower report, Laxalt said on ABC-TV's David Brinkley show.

Though most lawmakers have urged Reagan to admit he personally made mistakes in launching the arms-for-hostages swap with Khomeini's government and in allowing his National Security Council to run wild, Laxalt said Reagan is not yet willing to make that concession.

"He must, if not apologize, get very close to that," said Dole. "He should say, 'Mistakes were made and some of them were mine.'"

"In 20-20 hindsight, he should say this was a flawed policy—it was a trip that shouldn't have been taken," said Laxalt. "More important than that, though, he (Reagan) must get his head and his gut squarely on top of the situation. It's absolutely critical that he go out right."